



# FIA Matters!

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Submit stories by e-mail to [FIA-Newsletter@michigan.gov](mailto:FIA-Newsletter@michigan.gov)

## Holiday party lifts spirits for foster families and children

By Cyntheal Cooper, Licensing, Adoption and Foster Care Supervisor

Calhoun County FIA, Battle Creek

[CooperC7@michigan.gov](mailto:CooperC7@michigan.gov)

Calhoun County foster and adoptive children and their families were treated to a holiday party at Peter Piper Pizza on Dec. 14.

There were at least two gifts for each child and 275 grocery bags full of grocery items, including cereal and a Tony the Tiger stuffed toy from Kellogg's so all the children could have their own bag. Calhoun County FIA, the Foster and Adoptive Family Resource Center, Kinship Care, Region 5 Post Adoption Support Services (PASS) and Starr Commonwealth Foster Care came together to plan and orchestrate this festive evening.

There was a clown giving out colorful helium filled balloons, Miss Piggy, Kermit, and Santa and Mrs. Claus.



**Santa, Mrs. Claus and Kermit -- foster parent Todd Harris, CPS supervisor Ailene Buchtrup and Stacey Babcock -- offered seasonal good wishes at the event.**

matching presents to children, wrapping, and then came the day to move all of the grocery bags and gifts to Peter Piper Pizza.

Loading and unloading was a sight to see! FIA staff members, adoptive parents and their children, and Peter Piper staff all pitched in. With 403 guests enjoying all the pizza, salad bar and drinks they could consume, volunteers from all of the agencies dressed up to entertain. It was inspiring to see and be part of such a community collaboration to benefit the children and their families and to see more than 20 FIA staff from several different programs involved in this project. A special note of appreciation goes to our licensing workers, [Marie Shipp](#) and [Carla Wright](#), who went above and beyond their duties to make this a well-organized and fantastic evening for our families.

Another recent Calhoun County FIA project was Halloween trick or treating for foster children. FIA staff from all programs, on all three floors of our building, provided candy. Volunteers took the children around to trick or treat and to see staff dressed up and decorated offices. What a sight!

## Today's big story



Some partners in the project were: (l-r) Marie Shipp, FIA; Pat Scheid, Kinship Care; Korey Wheeler, Region 5 PASS; Carla Wright, FIA; Sheri Babcock and Nancy French, Foster and Adoptive Family Resource Center. The inset photo shows gifts including the 275 bags of groceries that were distributed.

## Gift exchange becomes Salvation Army donation in Wayne County

From Sharold Lewis, Family Independence Manager  
Wayne County FIA Glendale-Trumbull District, [Highland Park LewisS2@michigan.gov](mailto:LewisS2@michigan.gov)

The Glendale District team 4370 decided last year that, instead of exchanging gifts for Christmas, we would donate our money to help someone else for Christmas. As a result the staff donated \$115 to the Salvation Army to help out needy families for the holidays.

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## Livingston FIA's Jeanette Freeland honored for community contributions

From Susan Hull, Acting Director

Livingston-Washtenaw FIA

[HullS@michigan.gov](mailto:HullS@michigan.gov)

FIA employee **Jeanette Freeland** was honored by the Livingston County Human Services Collaborative Board at their annual meeting in December. The board gave Jeanette the 2004 HSCB Leadership Award. The HSCB told the community that Jeanette is a committed FIA employee who is a true leader in the community.

Jeanette serves in a leadership role on a variety of groups including the Howell Area Youth Assets Coalition, the Coordination of Children and Families Workgroup, and the Livingston County Community Alliance where she served as coordinator for the Run Drugs Out of Town Run. She also participates in several additional groups too numerous to list.

Jeanette also volunteers in the Livingston County community. She raises money for Oakland Livingston Human Services Agency during their annual Walk for Warmth, serves as a mentor to a local student, and is very involved in activities through the Howell Public Schools.

Jeanette truly embodies what collaboration means. She brings her coworkers, professional peers and the rest of the community along. Because Jeanette Freeland lives out collaboration on a daily basis, Livingston County is a stronger and healthier community.

Those of us at the Livingston County FIA want to extend our congratulations to Jeanette for her dedication to the community and the effective role she has played as a true leader in Livingston County. Jeanette is married, has two sons in college and is a resident of Howell.

■ Susan Hull was recently named director of Ingham County FIA in Lansing.



Thanks to the Antrim County FIA staff (pictured) for participating in a two-week food drive contest to collect food for the local Commission on Aging. This was a collaborative effort involving FIA and a number of county departments. The contest ended Dec. 10 and reaped over 1,650 pounds of food to be used for holiday baskets for Antrim County Senior Citizens. Antrim County FIA won the contest with a contribution of 689.92 pounds!

– From Rhonda Voorheis

### Michigan Court establishes self-help center

Are you interested in doing your own legal work? The State Court Administrative Office has created a "Self-Help Center" Internet site to help you find legal assistance, learn about Michigan law, and represent yourself in some legal matters. This site does not provide legal advice.

"If you represent yourself, you are called a 'pro se' or 'self-represented' litigant," the site says. "All adult citizens have the constitutional right to represent themselves in court." The site includes general information links on affordable legal help, alternative dispute resolution, how to find legal information and "going to court: where to start."

It also includes this warning: "Anyone with access to your computer can tell what Internet sites you have visited. In some situations (for example, when domestic violence is an issue) it may be safer to find information on the Internet at a local library or other public place. Also, most computers have a browser history and a 'cache' of temporary files. Although you can control this at your home computer, you may not be able to do that from a public location."

You can find the site at

<http://courts.michigan.gov/scao/selfhelp/selfhelphome.htm>

### Concerned about your eating habits?

Michigan Employee Service Program

[www.michigan.gov/esp](http://www.michigan.gov/esp)

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, up to 16 million Americans are affected by an eating disorder. There are three main types of eating disorders:

**Anorexia Nervosa** is characterized by an intense fear of gaining weight, self-starvation and body weight 15 percent below normal.

**Bulimia Nervosa** is characterized by binges (out of control eating of large quantities at one sitting), purges (getting rid of food by using laxatives, vomiting or obsessive exercise) and fear of gaining weight.

**Binge Eating Disorder** is characterized by episodes of binge eating, but without the purging behavior of bulimia.

You can take a free anonymous screening for eating disorders online at

[www.mentalhealthscreening.org/screening](http://www.mentalhealthscreening.org/screening)

(keyword: espml). You will receive immediate information if your answers are consistent with the presence of an eating disorder.

News You Can Use

# Strategic plan perspectives

From Julie Horn Alexander

FIA Administration of Performance Excellence

[HornJ@michigan.gov](mailto:HornJ@michigan.gov)

The department's strategic road map for the next three years has been distributed and is on the FIA-Net. As an FIA staff member you provided input to the plan and will soon have an opportunity to discuss with your manager the plan and your role in implementing it. Yes, we now have the plan, but what was the experience like of making recommendations to the strategic planning team? What was it like to spend hours and days reading, listening to presentations, discussing and deliberating and then finally developing the plan? This is a behind-the-scenes look at the strategic planning process. Here's what some of our planning partners and team members had to say about it:

The Office of Children's Ombudsman (OCO) was privileged to present recommendations to the Strategic Planning Team. Members were receptive to information and recommendations for policy and action priorities (to) improve services to children who have experienced child abuse or neglect and their families. We look forward to working as partners with the department to ensure its successful implementation.

**Lynne Martinez**

Children's Ombudsman

Office of the Children's Ombudsman

It was exciting to share my thoughts and ideas and to contribute toward their process. I have a lot of respect for FIA and its employees. They are charged with the task of serving Michigan's most vulnerable citizens. I...am impressed with the employees' dedication and commitment to their clients and customers. I am very confident that, even in this challenging time, with FIA's leadership, Michigan citizens will receive excellent service.

**Bill Blacchiere**

Chief Operating Officer

Bethany Christian Services

President

Michigan Federation for Children & Families

"The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians was pleased to make a presentation...to increase awareness of tribal issues and concerns. I felt welcomed by the members and found them interested in my information. The exchange is vital to the relevancy of services. In particular, a better understanding of the concerns native people have in using state services can only help FIA and the people of Michigan.

**Kathleen McKee**, Indian Child

Welfare Worker

Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians

(Marianne) Udow invited members of the Kent County Permanency Planning Committee to make a presentation to the FIA Strategic Planning Team. Having worked in the agency for many years, this was gratifying because many of the decision-makers and implementers were assembled. Everyone was attentive and asked good questions. We appreciated being able to make what we believe were substantive recommendations, but seeing so many key staff focus on the same issues at the same time was impressive.

**Jake Terpstra**, Chair

Kent County Permanency Planning

Committee

I am very pleased with the broad input from customers, partners, stakeholders and our staff...My single biggest hope...is embodied in the plan's initiatives to reengineer business processes, including policy and task simplification, and to improve our information system technology. Success in these initiatives is critical to the success of the other initiatives and depends upon all of us in leadership roles guiding, monitoring, and managing the process.

**Marc Del Mariani**, Director

Van Buren County FIA

As a representative of the field, my experience was enlightening, rewarding and exciting. As we move forward with implementation, our challenge is to embrace the mission, goals and initiatives so that we will be able to achieve successful outcomes. I hope that we will be able to unplug from some of our old ways of doing business and plug into a new beginning with the plan as our guide!

**Earnestine Morgan**, District Manager

Wayne County Medbury District

When I think about my experience as part of the Strategic Planning Team, I keep coming back to the importance of communication and inclusion. We all have our work world, our sphere of influence, where we try every day to make a positive difference in people's lives. But, we also need to understand and to contribute to the bigger picture. We need to know our agency's goals and we need frequent updates on the initiatives that are under way. I am hopeful the commitment to two-way communication will continue.

**Doug McCombs**, Director

Alpena-Presque Isle County FIA

As an internal auditor I have had very little contact with the individuals and families we serve. For me, being part of the strategic planning process reinforced the value of our department and the services we provide. I think it is important to define our priorities to ensure we use our scarce resources to provide the best services. While some of the days listening to multiple presentations from customers and stakeholders were excruciatingly long, the input we received was valuable in helping us to define our priorities.

**Rita Barker**, Director

FIA Office of Internal Audit

The greatest difference for me was that the state director was such a presence in the process and helped shape the agency's expanded thinking and outcomes. Another unique aspect was the sense that this change wasn't just happening in this agency, but across state government. There is a definite connection with the governor and her values and how state government is going to change when the state is undergoing a major shift in economy and resources.

**Margaret Warner**, Director

Oakland County FIA



**Date:** Jan. 18  
**To:** FIA Matters!  
**Subj:** Thanks for the help

I would like to thank 45 of my Kalamazoo County FIA coworkers and one coworker's mother who were my "FIA Support Team" during fall 2004. For nearly three months my son, Derek, was in Nashville, Tenn. for high dose chemotherapy and a stem cell transplant – treatment for a recurrence of his cancer. I was Derek's support person and caregiver. This awesome group of people came together through the initiative of **Debi Scott**, an eligibility specialist who assembled daily cards and gifts for us to open, read, and enjoy while we were so far from home. Each of my cards had a thinking of you sentiment and each of Derek's had a get well wish. Our gifts were individually wrapped and contained something especially suited for that day. There were more than 100 in total! We are forever grateful for this group of kind, generous and caring friends and want all of FIA to know about them too!

**Bess Klobucher**, Recoupment Specialist  
Kalamazoo County FIA, Kalamazoo

Your letters,  
intercepted  
and otherwise

**Date:** Jan. 12  
**To:** **Bernard Hoogland**, Family Independence Manager  
Kent County FIA, Grand Rapids  
**Subj:** **Elizabeth Scholten**, FIS Kent County FIA

This is to let you know what a fantastic job your worker, Elizabeth Scholten, has done. I actually got a job as a finance manager and would not have been able to accomplish any of this had it not been for Elizabeth and her making me aware of some of the programs available through Kent County. She was extremely detailed, thorough, friendly and definitely went the extra mile to help me get on track. If I had ten friends like that (or even just one) I'd be the happiest girl in the world. She's been just great. Thanks so much.

**Melissa Loomis**

Cedar Springs

■ *Elizabeth Scholten is a family independence specialist with the Kent County FIA.*

**Date:** Oct. 29  
**To:** **Macomb County FIA**  
**Sterling Heights District Office**  
**Subj:** **Viester Ware**

My son was an adult with disabilities (and) he passed away Oct. 13, 2004. Our caseworker was Viesther Ware. I would like to tell you how wonderful it has been to work with her these past few years.

It is not easy to have to ask for help. It is harder when you've never done it before. My son had a full psychotic break and required my full attention. Our income was cut and we were really struggling. I didn't even know help was available.

From our very first encounter Ms. Ware was very professional yet I could sense the genuine concern in her eyes. As time passed, and her visits to our home increased, I can honestly say I felt she was part of the team of people I surrounded myself with who I relied on for his best care. Ms. Ware is kind and humane. She always was gentle and caring with my son.

You can be very proud that Ms. Ware represents the best and finest of your employees. I am honored to have worked with her and I hope there is some way you can reward or compensate her for her integrity and kindness. I was deeply touched that she took time to even make a visit to the funeral home and see (my son) a final time. It is not just a job for her. Parents know when someone really cares about their child and I was so blessed to have her assigned to my son.

**Tami Fiorelli**

Sterling Heights

■ *Viester Ware is an adult services specialist with Macomb County FIA Sterling Heights District office.*

**FIA Matters!** is a product of  
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Marianne Udow, Director  
Karen Stock, Director  
Office of Communications  
Larry VanDeSande, editor

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